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ABSTRACT

In times of crisis, students, teachers, and other staff members can be deeply affected. Since a crisis can occur at any time, having an effective crisis intervention plan for school personnel in place is important. Immediate intervention following an emergency may help students deal with the immediate after effects of a death or loss and may alleviate or lessen long-term effects. Each school should have a designated crisis team and a team leader, the school counselor assigned to the school. The roles of all the crisis team members are explored. Details on alerting the crisis team are provided and some of the questions likely to arise in a faculty meeting following a crisis are examined. Ways to break the news to students and other initial steps are also provided. Tips are offered on recognizing those who should talk to a crisis team member (those closely affected by the current crisis or those that may not appear to be coping well); and just how long the crisis team should be available is also considered. Following the crisis, evaluation and modification of the plan should take place. Examples of the crisis intervention tracking form and a list of resources are provided. (RJM)

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Grief Counseling in the School: Help for Psychologists and Teachers

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A Model of a Crisis Intervention Plan Developed for Livingston Parish Schools

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Statement of Purpose

In times of crisis students, teachers, and other staff members can be deeply affected. Our purpose here is to make available crisis intervention services to those in need. Schools are being held more accountable for involvement in crises. Even though Livingston Parish is considered far removed from the nature and types of problems dealt with daily in the inner-city, recent facts suggest that these problems are also ours. Crises can occur at any time. It is difficult to predict a crisis situation, as the nature of the problem will affect the intervention needed. A crisis plan can make a difference in how effective a school system can be in helping the students cope with a difficult situation. An effective crisis intervention plan can help students deal with the immediate after effects of a death or loss. Furthermore, immediate

intervention following a crisis may alleviate or lessen long-term effects such as difficulty with the grieving process and stress. Thus, the following crisis intervention plan has been developed to help provide a plan of action for our school system professionals.

A Crisis Defined

A crisis can be defined as a sudden, generally unexpected occurrence or set of circumstances demanding immediate action. A crisis can also include an anticipated event which has the potential to disrupt the activities of faculty and students. It can affect a single individual, a portion of the student body, or the entire school system. Examples of a crisis may include a death, natural disaster, threatening situation, or accidents (bus, train, chemical, etc.).

The Crisis Team

The Crisis Intervention Team will consist of principals, school counselors, teachers, social workers, educational diagnosticians, school nurses and school psychologists. Each school will have a designated crisis team and team leader. The crisis team leader for each school will be the school counselor assigned to that school.

Roles of the crisis team members:

1. Crisis Team Leader:
   a. activates and coordinates the crisis team
   b. coordinates the topics of the faculty meeting
   c. assists the principal in leading the faculty meeting
   d. coordinates crisis counseling referrals

e. conducts beginning of the year crisis plan inservice at designated schools
f. decides on how to notify the students about the events that have occurred
g. collects tracking sheets and referrals
h. offers services to those directly involved
i. determines the "facts" of the crisis
j. provides support, counseling, and time out periods to the crisis team members
k. leads a debriefing session
l. maintains regular contact with principal throughout the crisis situation
m. coordinates follow-up interventions

2. Crisis Team Members:
   a. follow the instructions of the crisis team leader
   b. may conduct individual counseling
   c. help notify the students
   d. assist with the faculty meeting
   e. cover for teachers who need time-out

periods

f. fill out tracking forms on all individuals seen
g. distribute information sheets to be sent home with students
h. remain available and on site until the crisis team leader dismisses them
i. provide additional support to crisis team leader, principal, and staff
j. make handouts from the resource box to distribute at the faculty meeting or for interested parents

3. <u>The Principal:</u>
   a. determines whether a crisis has occurred
   b. notifies the crisis team leader
   c. notifies the faculty
   d. sets up the faculty meeting (preferable before school)
   e. coordinates the topics of the faculty meeting with the team leader

f. monitors the hallways - remains available and visible
g. provides support and encouragement to faculty
h. handles any media requests (See Media Policy Statement)

4. Teachers and other school staff:
   a. attend the school faculty meeting to learn the facts
   b. follow the crisis team's plan for sharing the news
   c. provide support to students and fellow staff members
   d. refer students who appear to have more trouble coping, whether or not they are directly affected by the crises
   e. seek assistance from the crisis team for class-wide difficulties
   f. adapt class lessons and requirements in consideration of the current emotional

states as needed

g. cover for teachers who need time-out periods
h. dispense accurate information to students
i. lead class discussions
j. answer questions from students about the crisis
k. model appropriate responses to the situation
l. discuss funeral procedures with students if the crisis involved a death

Alerting the Crisis Team

The principal of each school (or the acting designee) will be responsible for alerting the team immediately by contacting the team leader. If there is a question as to whether a situation is a crisis, the principal should not hesitate to consult the team leader, who will assist with the determination.

A copy of each school's crisis plan agreement will be updated and kept on file in the school's office and the Pupil Appraisal Center each August.

* If the team leader cannot be contacted, Mollie Lynn (667-2080, 567-2922) or Carolyn Higginbotham (664-7044) should be notified.

The Faculty Meeting: Commonly Asked Questions

What is the purpose of the faculty meeting?

To provide information to faculty and dispel rumors, to provide the faculty with immediate notification, to keep all staff involved as an integral part of a team.

When should the meeting be held?

Ideally, the meeting should be held thirty minutes before school on the day of the crisis, or in the event of a crisis during a holiday, the day class resume. If this is not possible, the meeting should be held that afternoon right after school. If the faculty meeting is held after school, the staff should be provided the facts about the crisis by memo in the morning (using the P.A. is not recommended).

Who should attend?

All school staff should attend. The principal, teachers, librarians, secretaries, cafeteria workers and custodial staff are all directly involved in the students' lives and provide a valuable support network in times of need.

What information should be provided?

The school staff will learn the facts about the crisis. The crisis team members will be introduced. All roles of school staff to assist that team will be clarified. Information will be provided to teachers and staff on how to address the crisis issues with their students. The student referral system will be reviewed.

What else will happen?

The crisis team will help staff process their own feelings and let them know what help is available for them personally from the crisis team. Information will also be provided to help

the staff know how to discuss issues with their students and how to handle daily activities (calling roll, the deceased student's desk and materials, etc.)

Breaking the News and Other Initial Steps

How to inform the students:

After the faculty has been informed, the crisis team will decide on a notification system for the students. It is important that the school faculty acknowledges what has happened, dispells rumors, and lets the students know that the school is concerned about the event. The crisis team members will each go to a room and make an announcement. Team members will be available during this time for immediate intervention individually and class wide when the class hears the announcement.

Check-Out Policy

A check out policy for students during the days of a crisis should be established. It is preferable that students do not go home to an empty house. Excessive check-outs should

be discouraged.

Media Policy Statement

The principal will be the only one authorized to release a statement of information to the media. During a crisis, issues of confidentiality can be overlooked and school officials should remember that the situations may be exploited. Provide a brief statement acknowledging the publicly known facts only. Avoid discussing any student or staff member specifically. The staff and students should not be interviewed and the media should not have access to the campus.

Crisis Team Rooms

Make sure that the designated rooms available for the crisis team do not have a lot of curtainless windows or heavy traffic. Maintain as much privacy as possible. Each school's contract plan with the crisis team

should pre-establish the location and availability of rooms.

Who Should Talk to a Crisis Team Member?

1. Teachers need to identify those at high risk (closely affected by the crisis) or those that do not appear to be coping well. Also, be prepared for reactions from students not directly affected by the current crisis. They may have had past personal traumas which may resurface.

2. Students and staff may seek out counseling as needed. One method may be to have every student in class write their name on a piece of paper. They then write a yes or no on their paper if they wish to talk to someone. The students should also be informed of the location of the crisis team's rooms. A system should be established which notifies the students of where and

when they should go to receive counseling to maintain their confidentiality.

3. Locate those students directly involved in the crisis (witnesses, participants, close friends, and relatives). Make a list of students involved and offer services to them. Pulling the students into a group to discuss what has happened may be effective, but do not pressure students to join a group who may be more comfortable in a one-on-one situation.

How long will the crisis team be available?

The crisis team will be on site as long as they are needed. The crisis team leader will make the determination when individual team members can be dismissed. It is likely, for almost any crisis, that the team will need to remain on-site for the first full school day following the crisis. After this day, the team leader will decide each day how many team members will be needed to accompany him or her on the following days.

Following the Crisis: Evaluation and Modification

After the crisis has subsided, a meeting will be planned by Mollie Lynn and Carolyn Higginbotham for all crisis team members and leaders. At that time, the crisis plan will be reviewed and amended as necessary. This evaluation of the crisis plan is an essential part of the process. It will allow the plan to evolve into a well-managed and efficient system for dealing with crises in Livingston Parish's schools.

School Crisis Plan Agreement

School : _____

Crisis Team Leader : _____

Contact Number: _____

Crisis Team Members and Numbers:

_____ _____
_____ _____
_____ _____
_____ _____
_____ _____

School Rooms Available for Crisis Intervention:

_____

_____

I have read the Livingston Parish Crisis Plan and agree to follow the guidelines set forth in implementing a crisis intervention program in my school.

_____ _____
Principal Date

_____ _____
Crisis Team Leader Date

Crisis Intervention Tracking Form
Livingston Parish School Board

Student: _____ Date: _____
Crisis Team Member: _____ Time: _____
Homeroom Teacher: _____ Grade: _____

This student was

___ directly involved in the crisis situation
___ indirectly involved in the crisis situation
___ affected through personal history
___ other _____
_____

Follow-up with this student is (check all that apply):

___ recommended
___ requested by student
___ requested by parent
___ requested by school staff, friend, crisis team member, other

Follow-up with this student will occur by (within a week) _____

Person who will follow up _____

Student's status (give a brief statement regarding student's emotional status at end of session):

*** Remember to give the student a parent permission form for future contact.

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Date: _____

Dear _____,

Your child, _____, was seen today by a crisis team member due to a crisis situation at school:

_____

_____

_____

[ ] It was recommended that your child should be monitored and counseled as needed until the crisis has subsided.

[ ] If you would like your child to receive counseling through the school again, please sign this form and return it to the school. If this form is not returned, your child will not receive counseling unless there is another crisis situation.

[ ] Your child requested regular counseling visits.

Please sign and return this permission slip to allow us to help your child through this difficult time. If you have questions, please contact _____ at _____.

I hereby give permission for my child to receive counseling as needed.

Parent's signature: _____ Date: _____

Contents of the Resource Box

The resource box, when compiled, will contain handouts for teachers, parents, and students. These handouts will cover topics such as: how to talk with children about death, activities to use in the classroom, warning signs to look for when referring children to a counselor, how to discuss funeral procedures when there is a death, and suicide prevention and intervention guidelines. There will also be lists of books about crisis topics and other agencies' crisis intervention plans for reference and ideas. Materials will be included for working with children: crayons, markers, paper, several pairs of scissors, jars, glue, tape, construction paper, old magazines, etc.

Resources

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS
AIDS Hotline - 1-800-342-AIDS
Alcohol/Drug Hotline - 1-800-ALCOHOL
American Red Cross - 926-4533
Baton Rouge Crisis Intervention Clinic
Cancer Information Service - 1-800-4-CANCER
Child Find - 1-800-IAM-LOST
Child Protection - 686-7257
Cocaine Hotline - 1-800-262-2463
COPE Phone Line - 1-800-864-9003
Hammond Alcohol & Drug Abuse Clinic - 543-4070
La. Federation of Families - 1-800-224-4010
Livingston Coroner's Office (Dr. Keith Mack) - 665-5119
Livingston Office of Community Services - 686-7257
Livingston Office of Family Support - 686-2261
Livingston Parish Health Unit - 686-7017 or 7829
Meadowwood Hospital - 1-800-272-6946
National Center for Runaway and Exploited Child 1-800-843-5678
National Child Abuse Hotline - 1-800-422-4453
National Runaway Hotline - 1-800-621-4000
National Youth Crisis Hotline - 1-800-442-4673
North Oaks Medical Center - 345-2700
Northshore Psych Care Line646-2273
Poison Control - 1-800-256-9822
Rosenblum Mental Health Center - 543-4080
Runaway Hotline - 1-800-231-6946
Southeast Spouse Abuse - 1-800-256-1143
Suicide Hotline - 1-800-333-4444
Volunteer and Information Agency Copeline - 523-2673
YMCA Battered Women - 624-4939
YMCA 24 Hour Rape Crisis Line - 483-8888

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Resources

Books and Pamphlets Available at the Pupil Appraisal Office:

"About Grief," Channing L. Bete Co., Inc. (Pamphlet)

My Dad Loves Me, My Dad Has A Disease - A Workbook for Children of Alcoholics by Claudia Black, Ph.D., MSW

The Fall of Freddie the Leaf, Leo Buscaglia, Ph.D.

The Kid's Book About Death and Dying, Eric E. Rofes & The Unit at Fayerweather Street School

Coping Series - Shirley Schwarzrock

Videos, Books, and Kits Available at the Media Center:

Conflict Resolutions: Grades 5-9 Intermediate. New York Sunburst Communications, 1994. (kit)

Conflict Resolutions: Grades 9-12 High School. New York Sunburst Communications, 1994. (kit)

An Alcohol Education and Traffic Safety Program for Elementary School. Virginia American Automobile Association, 1982. (3 videos: Grades 2,3, and 4)

First Aid: Newest Techniques Series A. New York Sunburst Communications, 1988. (video for Grades 7-12)

Peaceful Classroom, by Charles Smith, PhD. (book- preschool classrooms)

Creating Caring Classrooms. Indiana Phi Delta Kappa Agency for Instructional Technology, 1993. (video)

References

This crisis plan was compiled with ideas from the following persons or school systems:

Ashland Independent School District, Kentucky
Crisis Intervention in the Schools, Scott Poland and Gale Pritchard
St. Bernard Parish Schools Crisis/Suicide Intervention Procedures
Tangipahoa Parish Schools Crisis Intervention Manual

Abstract

GRIEF COUNSELING IN THE SCHOOL: HELP FOR PSYCHOLOGISTS AND TEACHERS

Errington, C.S. & Prestridge, C.C.

In times of crises students, teachers, and other staff members can be deeply affected. Crisis intervention services need to be available in a time of need. A crisis plan can make a difference in how effective a school system can be in helping students cope with a difficult situation. An effective crisis intervention plan can help students deal with the immediate after effects of a death or loss. Furthermore, immediate intervention following a crisis may alleviate or lessen long-term effects such as difficulty with the grieving process and stress. Thus, the following crisis intervention plan has been developed to help provide a plan of action for school systems professionals.